

REMARKS

Claims 1-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Claim 1 has been amended for clarity to make more clear who the sending and receiving participants are.

Claims 1-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 (a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,302,698 to Ziv-El (hereinafter "Ziv-El") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,370,355 to Ceretta, *et al.* ("Ceretta").

With regard to independent claims 1 and 8, unlike the claimed invention, Ziv-El fails to teach or suggest forming multiple groups. Specifically, Ziv-El does not propose or indicate "grouping at least some of the participants into a plurality of groups," as recited in amended claim 1. The examiner cites col. 10, lines 1-8 and col. 27, lines 3-12 for "grouping at least some of the participants into groups." In these cases, Ziv-El merely relates to organizing a dialogue by mutually listing "[t]he teacher and students on a class roster [to] constitute a class." Col. 10, lines 1-8. Ziv-El further says:

Only if a student's name (cross-referenced to a Log-on ID and/or a password) appears on the Class Roster selected by the teacher, is the student enabled to log on, and thereby join the teacher in a class. Col. 27, lines 3-12.

Ziv-El states that a student not on the class roster is not enabled to log on, and therefore can not join the teacher in a dialogue. This is different from the "groups" recited in claim 1, whose participants can participate in "a dialogue of messages between a moderator," and even send "a first-round message in response to" a question. Consequently, Ziv-El's "class" and "class roster" are not comparable to the "groups" recited in claims 1 or 8. Instead, the "class roster" merely defines who the moderator and participants are in a given dialogue. Furthermore, claim 8 is amended to make more explicit that there is a plurality of groups.

Ceretta is not cited for teaching grouping and therefore does not address this deficiency in Ziv-El.

Of the claim amendments, it is believed that none narrows the claims substantively.

None of the art cited by the examiner teaches or suggests the limitation in question, and accordingly the combination does not contain all of the elements of the claimed invention. Consequently, there is no prima facie case of obviousness.

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For at least the reasons stated above, claims 1-17 are allowable and a notice of allowance is requested.

Please apply any debits or credits relating to this matter to Deposit Account No. 08-0219, and consider this a request for any extension that may be due.

Respectfully submitted,



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